

and practices, but especially in unbelief. But the truth brings freedom from this bondage. It brings freedom from sin and its guilt and penalty and from the love of sin. It brings freedom from the bondage of corroding care and anxiety, and in their place brings peace.

V. 33. We be Abraham's seed: The Jews resented the idea that they were or ever had been in bondage. As a nation they had often been in bondage; for four hundred years in Egypt, to the Philistines and other surrounding nations, to the Babylonians, and at that very time they were in bondage to Rome. As individuals, like all other men, they were in bondage to sin and Satan. No man likes to admit that he is a slave, and yet how many there are who are slaves to some habit, such as drinking, profanity, selfishness, covetousness, lust, deceit. And, like all men, they are slaves to Satan, if they have not become slaves to Christ.

V. 34. Servant of sin: Much has been written of the cruelty meted out to slaves, and as to their helplessness. But no slave has been treated like the slave of sin. And none has received as little for his service. None is in a more hopeless bondage. It is impossible for him to deliver himself. He cannot be delivered by all the combined power of his fellowmen on earth and of the redeemed saints and angels in heaven. It is not a difficult process to enter into such bondage. All that is necessary is just to commit sin. Where is the man in all the world who has not committed sin? "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin." Therefore all are in bondage to sin.

V. 35. The servant abideth not: Bishop Ryle in commenting on this verse says: "The leading object in our Lord's mind seems to be to show the Jews the servile and slavish condition in which they were, so long as they rejected him, the true Messiah, and the free and elevated position which they would occupy, if they would believe in him and become his disciples. 'At present, living under the bondage of the ceremonial law, and content with it and Pharisaic traditions, you are no better than slaves and servants, liable, like Hagar and Ishmael, to be cast out of God's favor and presence at any moment. Receiving me and believing on me as the Messiah, you would at once be lifted to the position of sons, and would abide forever in God's favour, as adopted children and dear sons and daughters. You know yourselves that the servant has no certain tenure in the house, and may be cast out at any time; while the Son is heir to the Father, and has a certain tenure in the house forever. Know that I wish you to be raised from the relation of servants to that of sons. Now, under the bondage you are in, you are like slaves. Receiving me and my gospel you would become children and free.'"

V. 36. If the Son therefore shall make you free: The only freedom that is real or that is worth anything is that which comes from Christ Jesus. If we have that, it matters little what else we may or may not have.

V. 37. Abraham's seed: The Jews felt that all that they needed to insure their being God's children was to know that they had descended from Abraham. They were not showing the spirit of true children of Abraham, or they would receive him as the Messiah. To be a true child of Abraham, so as to be entitled to a place in the Father's house, they must have a higher claim than mere human descent. Jesus seems to say to them, "Your descent from Abraham will do you no good, for you are seeking to murder me, when I have come

to fulfil God's promises made to Abraham."

V. 56. Abraham rejoiced to see my day: God's promise of a Saviour was made to Abraham and he was told that he was to be of his descendants. Abraham believed God so fully that he could look into the future with a full assurance that the promise would be fulfilled. He knew that this Saviour was coming and putting his trust in him, he rejoiced and was glad.

V. 57. Thou art not yet fifty years old: The Jews of that day knew nothing of real faith by which a soul could be saved by trusting in a Saviour, so they could not understand how Abraham could possess it 1850 before that time.

V. 58. Before Abraham was, I am: Our Saviour here makes a positive claim to divinity and eternity. The Jews said he could not have been alive when Abraham was on earth. He said that he existed before Abraham was born. But he does not say that before Abraham was, he was; but says before Abraham was, *I am*. He is claiming present existence which had no beginning and will have no ending. It was this very expression that God used to introduce himself to Moses at the burning bush: "I am." Divinity has no past or future, but always abides in the present.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great feasts in the Jewish year, when, by God's command, all pious Jews went up to Jerusalem. (Deut. 16:16.) It was held in autumn, after the completion of the harvest, in the seventh month. The time of the Jewish "Passover" answered to our Easter "Pentecost" to our Whitsuntide, and "Tabernacles" to our Michaelmas. The seventh month was remarkable for the number of ordinances which the law of Moses required the Jews to observe. On the first day was the feast of trumpets, on the tenth day was the day of atonement, and on the fifteenth began the feast of tabernacles.

There are several things peculiar to the Feast of Tabernacles, which ought to be remembered in reading this chapter, because some of them throw light on it. (1) It was an occasion of special mirth and rejoicing with the Jews. They were to dwell in booths, or tabernacles made of branches for seven days, in remembrance of their dwelling in temporary booths when they came to Egypt, and to "rejoice before the Lord." (Lev. 23:39-43.) (2) It was a feast at which more sacrifices were offered up than at any of the Jewish feasts. (Num. 29:12-34.) (3) It was a feast at which, once every seven years, the law was publicly read to the whole people. (4) It was a feast at which water was drawn from the pool of Siloam every day with great solemnity, and poured upon the altar, while the people sang the twelfth chapter of Isaiah. (5) It was a feast which followed close on the great day of atonement when the peculiarly typical ordinances of the scapegoat and the high priest going once in the year into the holy of holies, were fresh in the minds of the people. These things should be carefully noted, and remembered, as we read through the chapter.

Josephus calls the feast of tabernacles "the holiest and greatest feast of the Jews." It was a Rabbinical saying, "The man who has not seen these festivities does not know what a jubilee is."

Whether this very year, when our Lord went to the Feast of Tabernacles was the precise seventh year in which the public reading of the law took place, we cannot now know for certain. Whether the custom of dwell-

ing in booths was literally kept up when the Lord was on earth may also be a matter of question. It certainly had not been observed for many years in the days of Nehemiah. (Neh. 8:17.) But that this feast was kept up with extraordinary festivity and rejoicing in the latter days of the Jewish dispensation is testified by all Jewish writers.

It was in the middle of this public rejoicing, and the concourse of the Jews from every part of the world, that the things recorded in this chapter took place. It stands to reason that all that our Lord said and did this week must have been more than usually public, and would necessarily attract great attention.

Wordsworth, Burgon, and others, consider the Feast of Tabernacles to have been a very significant type of our Lord's incarnation. I confess that I am unable to see it. If the feast was typical at all, which is not certain, I venture the conjecture that it was meant to be a type of our Lord's second advent. My reasons are these:

(a) It was the last in order of the Jewish feasts every year, and formed the completion of the annual routine of Mosaic ordinances. It wound up all.

(b) It was kept at the end of the harvest, when the year's work was done, and the fruits were all gathered in.

(c) It was an occasion of special rejoicing and festivity more than any of the feasts. The dwelling in booths seem to have been a circumstance of the feast less essential than the rejoicing.

(d) It followed immediately after the Feast of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement. On that day the high priest went into the holy of holies and then came out to bless the people. (See Isa. 27:13; 1 Thes. 4:16.)

(e) It followed immediately after the jubilee every fifteenth year. That jubilee, and proclamation of liberty to all, was in the seventh month.

(f) It was that special feast which, after the Jews are restored and Jerusalem rebuilt, the nation are yet to keep in the future kingdom of Christ. (Zech. 14:16.)

I venture this conjecture with much diffidence; but I think it deserves consideration. In the six points I have mentioned, I see much more of the second advent than of the first. To my eyes the Feast of the Passover was a type of Christ crucified—the Feast of Pentecost, of Christ sending forth the Holy Ghost in this dispensation—the Feast of Tabernacles, of Christ coming again to gather his people in one joyous company, to reap the harvest of the earth, to wind up this dispensation, to come forth and bless his people, and to proclaim a jubilee to all the earth.—Bishop Ryle.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL CENTENNIAL DAY.

A national observance of the one hundredth anniversary of organized Sunday-school work in America is being arranged for Sunday, May 6th, 1917. Every Sunday-school in the country is invited to participate in this important event, which is intended not only to commemorate and celebrate the beginning (in May, 1817) of that great constructive work which has been such a potent factor in the development of our nation, but also to promote greater interest and co-operation in future Sunday-school work throughout the country.

Complete, attractive programs for Sunday-school Centennial Day in pamphlet form, including songs (words and music), will be issued by the American Sunday-school Union, and furnished free to all Sunday-schools, upon request, in the quantity required. Superintendents and other

Sunday-school representatives are invited to secure full information as soon as possible regarding these programs and the use thereof. All communications should be addressed to the Anniversary Committee, 1816 Chestnut street, Philadelphia, Pa.

The American Sunday-school Union will also celebrate its own Centennial Anniversary throughout the week beginning May 6th. The leading features of the event will be held in Philadelphia, where the headquarters of the society are located. Special anniversary literature, descriptive of the work of the society, is also being issued and may be secured free upon request.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES

CURSE OF COWARDICE.

M., Mar. 12. The root of cowardice. Isa. 51:12, 13.
T., Mar. 13. Giants in the path. Num. 13:26-33.
W., Mar. 14. The apostle's shame. Matt. 26:55, 56, 69-75.
T., Mar. 15. Safety first. 2 Sam. 15:13-23.
F., Mar. 16. A cure for cowardice. Luke 12:1-9.
S., Mar. 17. Fearing man, we defy God. Prov. 29:25.
Sun., Mar. 18. Topic—The Curse of Cowardice. John 18:15-27.
Where does our danger of cowardice lie? Why do men despise a coward? How can we grow morally brave?

The Root of Cowardice (Isa. 51:12, 13): Cowardice is the lack of courage to face danger or difficulty. Isaiah in these verses gives the real root of cowardice as forgetting God. We are not afraid of enemies, when we know we are stronger than they; nor are we afraid of difficulties when we know that we are capable of overcoming them. It is only when we feel our weakness or inability that we lose courage. If we could only remember that God is always with us, we would never fear. He is able to help us in every way. He delights to do so. He is just waiting for us to ask His help. The child has no fear of anything when its hand is clasped in the strong hand of a loving father. Let us place our hand in our Father's and depend upon Him for help in meeting all dangers and overcoming all difficulties.

Giants in the Path (Num. 13:26-33): The ten spies were frightened by the giants whom they saw in the land of Canaan, and their report frightened Israel. Only two had the courage to go up against the giants. They knew the strength of the giants and that they dwelt in walled cities. But they knew God's strength. They remembered how He had delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt, how He had brought them through the Red Sea, and guided them through the wilderness. Now they felt sure that He could and would lead them into the land of Canaan. These two were the only men of all the whole host of Israel that were permitted to go up into the promised land. In the parcelling out of the land Caleb, who had been the speaker in trying to encourage Israel to advance, was given the city in which the giants dwelt. He had to capture it and drive out or destroy the giants. He did not fear, nor hesitate. He trusted in God and overcame them and received God's blessing in doing so. We are told that Anak, the king of the giants, had three sons who were giants. The great giant that meets us in the pathway of life is Satan. But there are other giants also, such as sin, sorrow and service. It seems at times that any one of these giants will overcome us. Sin takes possession of our lives, and we cannot overcome it. But our Saviour has conquered sin and we can have the benefit of his victory, if we will only accept it. Sorrow sometimes comes as a dark cloud over our lives and seems about to crush us down. God is not only above every cloud, but He is beneath it as well, standing just by